



King County

Elections Division

Department of Executive Services

919 Southwest Grady Way

Renton, WA 98057-2906

206-296-1540 Fax 206-296-0108

TTY Relay: 711

February 4, 2009

Washington Secretary of State
Secretary Sam Reed
Legislative Building
PO Box 40220
Olympia, WA 98504-0220

Dear Secretary Reed:

Pursuant to ongoing meetings and communication with your office on the status of the federal certification and testing process, please consider this an official request for the Office of the Secretary of State to approve Premier Election System Assure 1.2 voting system for use in King County on a provisional/emergency basis. The upgrade of King County Elections' central count tabulation system is necessary in order to minimize the overall risk of administering elections in King County with the current equipment.

King County Elections has been in regular communications with the United States Election Assistance Commission and the vendor for over two years monitoring the process. While headway is being made it is not anticipated that a report recommending certification from the Voting System Test Lab or federal certification will occur in the next several months. Timing is critical for the long awaited upgrade to the current tabulation system. Based on best practices and advice from your office, we are committed to using the upgraded system for the first time in a low volume special election. The deadline for a decision on using the equipment in the May special election is March 18, much sooner than anyone anticipates for resolution of the federal process.

Upgrading the existing vote tabulation system in King County is necessary to mitigate the overall risks associated with administering elections with the current equipment. While we have been able to achieve reasonable input and maintain the required accuracy, the current vote tabulation equipment in King County is reaching the end of its life expectancy. The equipment was first implemented in King County in 1998 and has since been used through 63 separate elections, numerous recounts and tabulated millions of ballots. Parts are no longer available for portions of the optical scanners or ballot feeders used in the central count environment. We are also unable to purchase additional new or used ballot feeders to supplement the current system.


The population growth in King County combined with the increasing complexities of administering elections and the inherent database limitations of the existing tabulation system are an on-going risk. Technical Services staff from King County has worked closely with technical staff from your office to develop and test a contingency plan and procedures to mitigate these risks. During the 2008 General Election the contingency plan had to be activated splitting the vote tabulation database and further elevating the risk of using the current equipment in King County.

With the growing uncertainty surrounding the timing and constant delays of the federal certification process King County has weighed all of the factors and determined to pursue securing a provisional/emergency certification of the Assure 1.2 system. This would allow use of the system in a May special election to refine procedures and business process in advance of the primary and general election.

It is King County Election's desire to work closely with your staff as we conduct extensive acceptance testing on the system to ensure that it is fully functional, meets all statutory requirements and is ready for use in an election. The work already accomplished in collaboration with your office has been productive for this project.

Please advise if any additional information is needed from King County Elections to begin this process. Should you or your staff have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 206.296.1540 or Bill Huennekens at 206.296.9932.

Sincerely,



Sherril Huff, Director
King County Elections

cc: Nick Handy